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Ain't I a woman?

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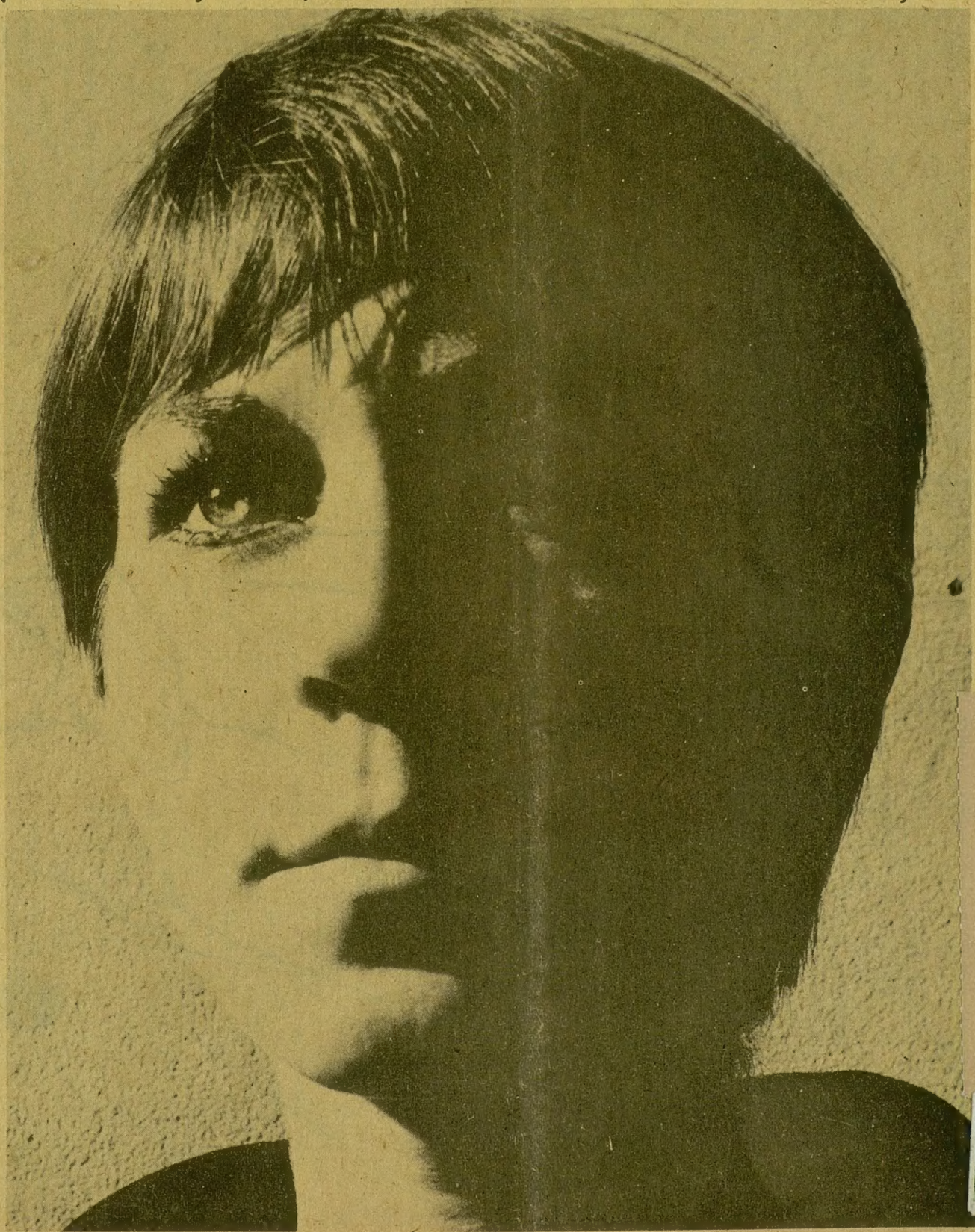


Donna Brobeck
431 Rio Grande Road
Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514
NOV24 1970 PM

Ain't I A Woman?

I have been reading copies of your paper and in the October 9th issue there is a double page spread of stories on the Panther Constitutional Convention. The first story written by white women really horrified me at first. Then I read the second story which you credit as a reprint from Come Out where, also a white woman, at the Panther Convention was told by a friend that she came on like "whitey."

The first story written is full of racism - only the women writing it weren't even aware of it. It seemed to me a repetition of the women's movement when one of the leaders of the organization that worked closely with the abolitionist movement spoke out against "Sambo" after the Emancipation. This woman didn't have to put down Black people in her anger, but she did it and it was a discrediting affair to the women's movement.

A fat lot of good the Emancipation did is recorded in history and one of the big reasons for the calling of the Constitutional Convention.

I'd like to call your attention to the title of your paper. You know who said it and where it was said. I don't remember who wrote this in her memoirs - but as she was participating in a rather large meeting she was very upset when Sojourner Truth showed up at this Women's Convention. Yet, at this convention, Sojourner answered the stupid remarks made by prejudiced males in the most eloquent way. I came across this quote (of whoever this woman was who wrote this in her memoirs) and I copied it out in notes I was making on another subject - I was so afraid I might never again remember where to find it if I ever wanted to - I told my daughter about it - she was 9 or 10 years old then and everytime parts of it were quoted we both used to rejoice.

My daughter introduced me to copies of your paper in the same way - the title meant Sojourner at the Convention (my daughter is 23 now). So, to read about the Constitutional Convention convened by Black people by racist sounding people in your paper is a hurt I can't quite describe.

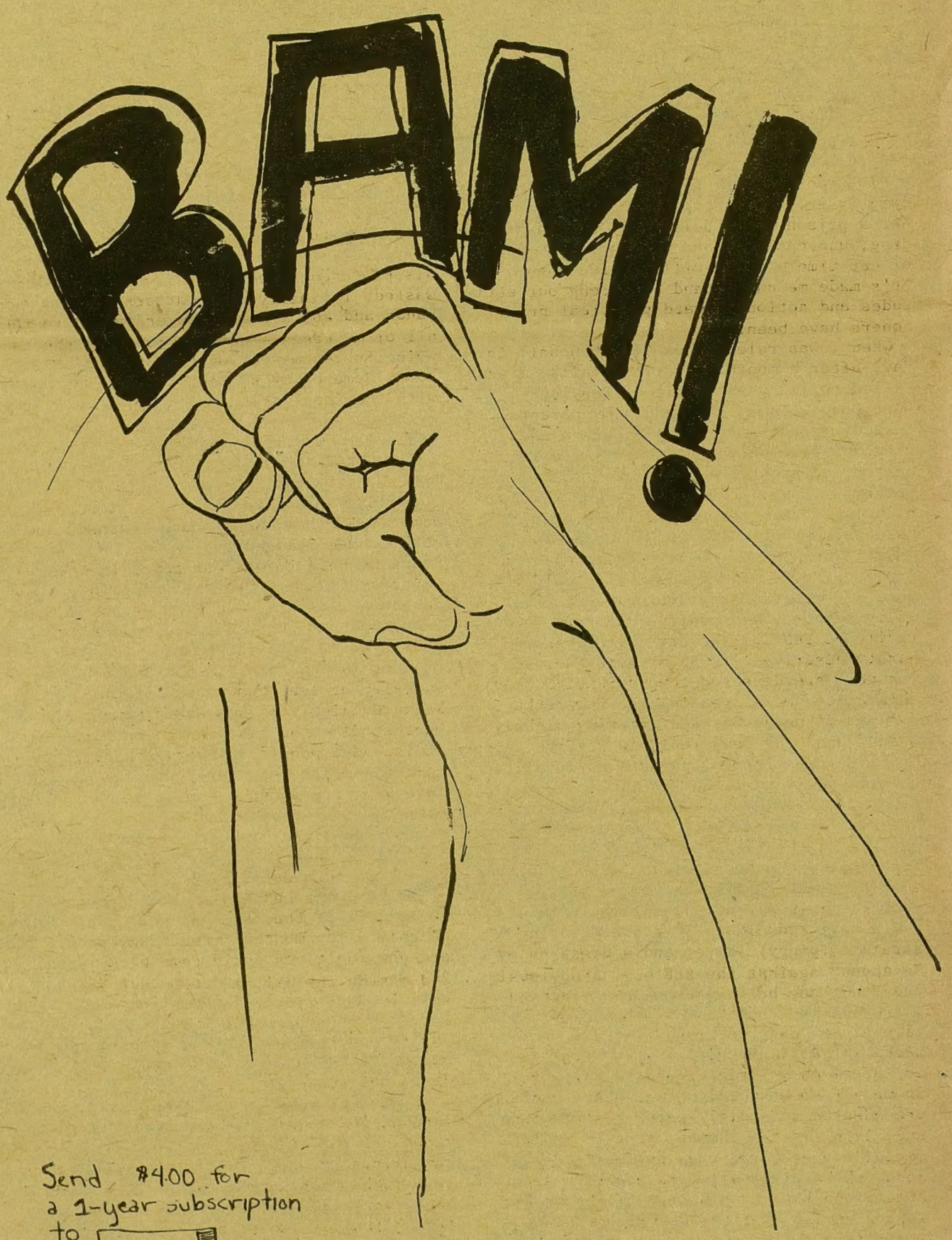
I think white women are more alert to the Women's Liberation movement right now. This doesn't mean that Black women are not with it, there are other political problems where Black people are concerned. I haven't heard of a police shoot-up of a Women's Liberation office or a Gay Liberation office. Angela Davis was put into solitary confinement on her arrest. Erica has been imprisoned for a year. When the establishment goes after Blacks they go with a vengeance. The writers in the article don't seem to understand anything of the Black people's problems, not only in the historical sense, the present period, too.

Sophie Wessel

SOJOURNER TRUTH,
"THE LIBYAN SIBYL."

"That man over there say that a woman needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helped me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me a best place ...
And ain't I a women? Look at me. Look at my arm! I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me...
And ain't I a women? I could work as much and eat as much as a man when I could get it, and bear the lash as well...
And ain't I a woman? I have borned thirteen children and seen them most all sold off into slavery. And when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard...
And ain't I a woman?"

Sojurner Truth: Speech before the Woman's Rights Convention at Akron, Ohio in 1851.



AIN'T I A WOMAN? is published every three weeks by the Publications Collective of the Iowa City Women's Liberation Front, P.O. Box 1169, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

We are a collective of 10 women functioning either as a front for a world wide conspiracy of Radical Lesbians or the house cornfield of the Women's Movement.

The voice of the Midwest needs to be heard in the Women's Liberation movement. Ain't I A Woman? will print without editing any laid-out page from a Midwest (New Mexico thru Ohio) Women's Liberation group. We would like to encourage other women to start working collectively to avoid elitism and destructive power relationships that pit us against each other. We will send details on deadlines, page size, column length, etc. if you would like.

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NO MORE PRISONERS OF WAR

I've been in prison now for 6 months - a different kind of prison than the POW camp my friends rescued Tim Leary from, but a prison nevertheless. It's been a drag, unnecessary, and an absolute waste of our time - but I will be free soon. It's made me understand how wrong our attitudes and actions toward political prisoners have been.

When I was released on $160,000 bail in May, after a month in various jails, I was exiled to the very middle of Babylon - Fort Dodge, Iowa. Placed in my parents' custody (after all, where should a young pregnant revolutionary be sent - to keep her out of trouble - but "home" to her mother), I was locked into my whiteskin-privilege past, forced to live with my parents, except for brief sojourns to court, when I have to be chaperoned by my parents. Pretty decent psychological torture - a constant assault on every level of my identity and sanity (can Fort Dodge really be real?!): severe culture shock hardly describes it. So my life energies, for now, are directed toward SURVIVNG in this alien world, reading the few books I can get my hands on, and grinning nightly when I hear the news (only to receive three-hour lectures from my parents on morality and the glories of the Republican Party).

Our original mistake made it easy for the Feds to impose such insidious punishments - on the advice of my lawyers, we tried (very unsuccessfully) to pretend that I was a sweet, apolitical young thing, hoping to win pig Julius Hoffman's favor and a bail reduction. (Picture me using straight (piggy) lawyer and a dress as my "weapons" against the state...!) Obviously the Feds knew better - somehow it seemed improbable to them that weatherwoman/fugitive Linda just "reformed" after a few weeks in jail, especially when I refused to inform on my friends and "clear myself." So we got no bond reduction, heavy and unprecedented custodial/travel restrictions, and, later in the summer, another indictment. But even worse than Hoffman's decisions (which after all were pretty reasonable given that he's a part of the Enemy) is the sexism that has kept me here unnecessarily all summer long. Some of my "revolutionary" male lawyers made empty promises and priorities (to calm my "hysteria", no doubt) to get me out - and they've done nothing. I guess it was hard for them to understand that, being a woman, I have any important political work to do in the few months before my trials begin - so they abandoned and isolated me even more by promising to help and not following through.

However, I'm not really so bitter, only disappointed at having a trust betrayed and wasted. I finally took matters into my own hands and got a woman lawyer/friend to take all of my cases - quite a job, but she is going to get me out on the streets again soon. Some of my sisters are helping her with the legal shit, and helping me keep my head together - and some men, revolutionaries in a real sense of the word, who are changing their attitudes/actions toward women, have even joined. So I will be free soon. Sisterhood is powerful - and very beautiful. (How much I have learned, how much I have changed...)

But we have to use our power in other ways, too. As I wrote this, Angela was caught and now is held without bond. Pun Plamondon was captured in August and starts trial soon for bombing the CIA recruiter in Ann Arbor. Bobby Seale has been in jail for over two years. Afeni Shakur, Erika Huggins, the New Haven women, the Panther 21 - the list can go on forever. It includes people in every state, on every campus - draft resisters, kids we know and love and care about. We need each other to be free - our people and our lives are our best weapons in this war. Having our people in jail is a waste of our time - and we can do something about it.

Obviously, some people should probably go to jail if they can get good deals or do only a few months' time. Many people who are now fugitives could come back, spend 2-3 months in jail, and come out "clean" - able to move freely, accomplish more, make more/wider connections than you can when you're underground. So for some, a few months in the hands of the state will be a drag, but worth it.

We can get some of the people out legally, through the courts, or by raising bail money, so they can have a few months' freedom before the pigs try to put them away. Skip Taube, busted for harboring a Federal Fugitive (gee, officer - that's just my friend Pun...) can be free for $3000. We got Dianne out (thanks to our New York sisters, especially RAT women) in time to get her an abortion and a few months' (relative) freedom before her trials. But we just can't give up on people when they are captured - we have to fight on every level, in every way, to get them out and back in the streets with us.

There are others, though, who won't get by so "easily". The pigs want them off the streets permanently - so they abduct Bobby Seale in the middle of the night, bust Angela despite her great disguise, put Bernadine on their 10-most-wanted list. These sisters and brothers can be freed only by taking a few risks. So when the pigs tried to put Afeni back in jail, prisoners all over New York took hostages, rioted for a week - demanding her freedom and substantive bail reforms so other people could be freed as well. (Break open the jails - the people inside are part of us. A Puerto Rican junky sang beautiful songs through the bars to calm my angry tears..) When Leila Khaled was captured the PFLP freed her by risking the anger/reprisals of the world, and their own expulsion from the Palestinian guerilla command. They won. So can we.

"The revolution is upon us. Unless we stop them now, these young radical revolutionaries will change our whole way of life," said the head pig at the oink-in on the steps of Congress. He's right, of course - we're in the middle of a revolutionary war, though we may be just beginning to realize it, accept it, understand what its possibilities mean in terms of our own lives. We have to take time to live, to create a beautiful culture and beautiful lives, to love each other - but our love for each other means a lot of responsibilities, too, especially when our sisters and brothers get ripped off. THERE SHOULD BE NO PRISONERS OF WAR. We need each other to be free, so we can grow together, learn together - fight and win together. We have to fight so Eldridge can come back, so all my weatherfugitive-friends, Janie Alpert, Rap Brown can come back and live among us. It means changing ourselves/loving ourselves a lot, realizing how much we really are oppressed, fighting for the kinds of lives we could live if the pigs hadn't robbed us of our freedom - and our possibilities. We really are as strong as we want to be, as strong as the risks we are willing to take to win our freedom.

Power to my brothers & sisters of the Proud Eagle Tribe. Freedom to all prisoners of war, all fugitives, all exiles...Power and love to all of us.

FREEDOM. Joy.

Linda

2 WOMAN?

20 NOV. 1970

LEILA KHALED TELLS WHY SHE IS A COMMANDO

(Continued from the last issue.) LNS

I learnt that I was something called a "refugee" when I was six or seven years old; I was quarrelling with a neighbor's child and she said to me, "You are a refugee so you shouldn't shout at me." How could I escape being aware of the Palestine problem? My parents talked of their former life in Haifa, my friends lived in the unnatural conditions of the camp and we learnt about Palestine in school.

By the time I was 16 I was, secretly, a member of the Arab Nationalist Movement, believing in a liberated Palestine within a unified, socialist Arab world. My elder brothers and sisters had joined this party before me. We planned, we dreamed, we argued. I visited the West Bank, what was left of Palestine, and travelled all over it to get to know my country.

17.25 hours. Compass bearing 070

It took June, 1967, and the loss of all Palestine and the expulsion of another quarter million Palestinians to make me decide that I had to do something positive for the cause of liberation. This is the biggest defeat that the Israelis have brought on themselves by their military victories. They brought a whole new generation of Palestinians into the battle who believe only in the armed struggle against Israel.

And so I joined the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Last summer I did the full commando training with the PFLP, after which I was selected and trained for this mission.

17.28 hours. Compass bearing 118

The Israeli Mirages stayed with us until we crossed the Lebanese-Syrian frontier. I spoke to the new Damascus airport tower in Arabic and told them we were going to land there - I didn't ask permission. He replied that we could land on the right runway but I told him we were going to land on the nearer left runway because we were very short of fuel.

On the intercom I told the cabin crew to evacuate the passengers by the emergency exits as soon as the plane had landed because it was going to be blown up. I asked the captain to switch off the engines as soon as we touched down, otherwise we could taxi too near the airport building. "I can't do it," he said. "Then I can do it, " I replied. I also told him to apply the brakes slowly, otherwise I might fall and the hand grenade would go off. In fact, he made a very good landing.

17.35 hours. Touchdown at Damascus

As soon as we stopped rolling, I looked into the passenger cabin and called out, "Evacuate immediately." At this moment the crew seemed alarmed and dashed past us into the plane. They were in their shirt sleeves and my friend shouted to them, "Take your jackets." But they didn't stop. I also called, "Thank you for your co-operation." "You're most welcome," came from the co-pilot.

In two minutes the plane was empty. I only saw the last four or five persons diving through the emergency exits and I told them, "Slowly, go slowly." But they didn't know who I was and didn't listen.

I went down the length of the plane to make sure it was empty. My friend then placed his bombs in the cockpit. He dashed out and stood with me near an emergency exit and I threw two grenades into the first class compartment. As soon as we threw them, we slid down the emergency chute. My friend landed on my head with a terrific bump and I felt as if my legs were broken. We picked ourselves up and ran for twenty metres and waited for the explosion. Nothing went off. It was awful agony to think that the job would only be half done.

Then my friend rushed back to the plane to reset the explosions. Because he is very tall he was able to pull himself up through another chute. I ran after him towards the plane. After a long minute in the plane, he slid out again and we ran back once more.

Still no explosion. Only two minutes later was there a big bang and the nose of the plane crumpled. My friend fired many shots into the wing of the plane to set the fuel tanks on fire but there was so little in them that they didn't ignite.

So it was all over. "Thank God," I said to myself. I felt very relaxed and very relieved and glad that no one had been hurt.

We started walking towards the airport building when a bus came along and picked up the passengers and us. We remained in the bus for half an hour while the Syrians cleared the airport building. I noticed my Greek friend and told him, "My friend and I did this." He burst into tears, and to comfort him I told him I would ask the Syrian authorities to cable his mother so that she needn't worry unnecessarily. We offered the passengers cigarettes and my friend gave the children sweets which they took cheerfully.

Since we had to wait, I said a few more things to the passengers to explain why we had hijacked the plane: "You may think we are criminals, but we are not. We are freedom fighters. The United States has supported Israel with Phantom planes and napalm and we have to make our protest felt by the American government. We were driven out 20 years ago and in 1967 Israel took the rest of our country and drove us out again. We are fighting to regain our freedom, our country and our homes. Tell others not to come to Israel as tourists. We are not against Jews, but only against Zionists."

After I had finished speaking, a lady, who said she was from California, asked me whether I had learnt my English "in America or in England." "In my country," I said. "We are not as ignorant as the Zionists say we are."

I would have liked to have seen the pilot again to ask him whether we had done a good job on the flight, to talk to him about Palestine and to invite him to visit us in Jordan. But this wasn't allowed. I only saw one of the pursers who told me that one lady had been injured getting out. I asked him to give her our apologies.

I got engaged four months ago to another resistance fighter, but who knows when we will be able to get married.

One question remains: will I have to hijack another plane to see my home town again...?

Punching Out A Woman

My last encounter with rampant anti-lesbianism occurred three years ago, when after I had parked my motorcycle at a hamburger stand, a drunk young man who did not like the way I looked came up to me and called me a queer; and when I failed to respond, he broke my nose.

The threat of that kind of physical assualt had hung over me for years. As a young lesbian, short-haired and defensive, I slouched through many rainy and half-drunk streets trying to figure out who I was. At that time, every catcall or muffled insult sounded like the prelude to a gang-beating - my world was full or angry young men on street corners. And late at night I sometimes fantasized armies of heavily armed lesbians, ready to help me beat them back in black boot military fashion.

So when finally, the real fist from the real drunk young man's anger hit my face, it wasn't as though I had never prepared for it. But during the period between those violent fantasies and the actual punch, I had changed my hair style and appearance to the point of not being readily recognizable as a lesbian. Essentially I looked like any other woman, except I drove a bike. The crazy guy was completely out of date - I'd been all set up for him eight years before that, so why did he wait until I'd gotten almost "respectable?"

Now, in retrospect, I believe he was not so much punching out a lesbian as he was punching out a woman who was carrying a motorcycle helmet. He didn't give a damn about my choice of sexual partners or whether I did nasty thing in bed; what upset him was my intrusion into two of his manly territories: machinery and action.

I had antagonized him, not as a pervert but as a somewhat liberated woman - capable of acting and thinking on my own - and that's what he'd been taught to react violently against.

The straight women involved in the women's liberation movement are beginning to face various degrees of this same blatant chauvinism from men: the hostility that lesbians have known about for years. They also are beginning to understand the enormous isolation that women - all women - are subjected to: isolation from each other because they have to compete for men's attenti[illegible] (whether he's a husband or a boss); [illegible]ation from activity (men do things while women sit and watch); isolation from decisions (women are told they are stupid and undependable); and isolation from knowledge (men gladly tell other men how the plumbing or the car work, and what keeps suspension bridges suspended.)

The lesbian solution to a male dominated society had traditionally been to "pass", to hide - to pair off with a lover (if she's lucky) and to surround herself with a few safe friends and let it go at that. This double life is so agonizingly schizophrenic and lonely it's a wonder we didn't all go mad long ago.

Straight women, as they begin to unravel the extent to which women are cheated and wasted in this society, are finding a better solution - the exact opposite of isolation. By banding together in small groups, they find they can develop strong supportive voices for themselves and each other, to help confront and change male attitudes toward them.

In this process, one of the problems they are going to have to think about is the fact that many men accuse them of being lesbians, just for taking part in the women's liberation movement, and for starting to think and act for themselves.

If ever there was a chance for a group of lesbians to talk openly, to teach straight women and learn from them and to begin to break down some of the myths about us, it's surely in these women's groups.

Because the women's liberation movement is still unstructured and democratic, and so loosely formed, in fact, that no one even knows how many groups there are, it is possible to be completely open and still anonymous.

Small groups of women meet once a week. Because the groups are small, it's easy to relax and get to know each other quickly.

It's been a long time coming, but if a change is going to come, now is when to begin it. My present fantasies are of an army of lesbians, heavily armed with information and support from each other, launching a real attack against male chauvinism and anti-homosexualism, by exchanging information and moral support with heterosexual women. Let's get to it.

WILLAMETTE BRIDGE/LNS

COME OUT OF THE CLOSET

BEFORE THE DOOR IS NAILED SHUT

One never knows But many do

THE MAN'S THEORY

However, there are some trends in the Women's Liberation Movement, such as separatism, which tend to reinforce false divisions among people. These trends are based on an incorrect awareness of oppression: The belief that men as men, and not the system, is the oppressor. Those who benefit from the inequality and exploitation in the present social system are not all men but a tiny minority of men and women. The "man is the oppressor" line has the dangerous possibility of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy - if men are treated as the enemy they may become so, and the needed revolution will be retarded or even tragically diverted into sexual, rather than political warfare.

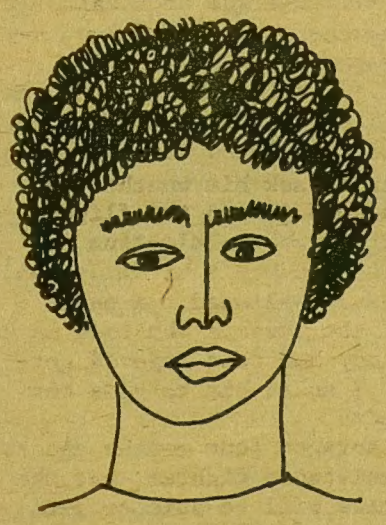
& THE MAN'S PRACTICE

Alone again, I started walking, was hassled three times in the next block, decided I couldn't hack it, and hailed a cab. Emergency-depression-economy-splurge. Settled in. Whew. But the driver had seen my WL button. Oops. All the way home, he proceeded to tell me how abortion was ok for them nigger and spic broads who breed so much, but no good for nice white girls like me. Soon I was shouting at him. At the end of the ride, he told me calmly that if we women really pushed "this liberation thing" men like him were going to start killing us, literally. "You think you know male violence--you ain't seen nothin' yet. These rapes and beatings are going to soar, baby. You can't tell me I'm not a king in my own home and get away with it." I told him I was studying karate, as many other women were, & we'd take a few of them with us if we had to go.

Woman-identified woman means

I have a preference about

who I share the shit with.



You're so strong you can take any shit that comes along

& here it comes.

If there's that many of us on the same crazy --

we're gonna do more than take over an asylum.

GRINNELL WLF CONFERENCE

We arrived at Grinnell on Friday night just as the first snowflakes of the season began to fall. Grinnell is an elite school, one of those "excellent" undergraduate colleges that none of the women I went with could have afforded to go to. It's a 60 mile drive along the interstate, the same distance from Iowa City as the Quad-cities area, only in the opposite direction. I've never been to Grinnell for a women's liberation meeting, but I have gone the other way, to Davenport to picket with Chicano women and men who were demanding jobs.

Women who go to Grinnell usually end up in the League of Women Voters, wives of businessmen and college professors--inveterate liberals. They can usually afford to be.

The main thing we have in common with the women there is our needs as women and a commitment to or interest in Women's Liberation.

When we got to the auditorium the meeting had already started. We came in just as a woman from Twin Oaks, a commune in Virginia, was talking about their commune--how they live, what they see as necessary for survival and growth, and those things she was experiencing. Not much about women, but I was proud of her, knowing that the same woman had come to our meetings last year when she was in high school in Iowa City. I was proud of what she was doing, and struck by her appearance of agelessness. And I wondered about all the women in her high school class who, unlike her, never had the choice of rejecting the university and its way of life. But I did not blame her for their plight. I think that's something I've learned from women's liberation.

Then Marlene Dixon came on--not as strong as I've heard her before, and not as soft either. More controlled, more burned out. She was talking about why she was getting out of Women's Liberation. It is a middle class, white organization, she said, and she went on to detail actions about the Equal Rights amendment, blasting women for supporting it. She went into great detail to explain how women should have been supporting extension of protective laws for men instead, and I thought, "I've seen this movie before." But we do it in small groups and we don't confuse our sisters with the women Marlene is accusing us of being. I thought, she spends too much time debating with NOW, & I've heard that debate & we've all taken part in it so many times & who the hell is she talking to? She belittled those projects we've worked on--but they didn't sound like our projects--they all sounded like pretty high class, frivolous things.

Then came the clincher--a woman asked whether any effective work would be done about racism, imperialism, capitalism while you remained in college, whether maybe you didn't have to give that up--Marlene replied that there were SOME colleges and universities where you could do effective work. Wow, I thought, OUT OF THE DAY CARE CENTERS & INTO THE COLLEGES. I've been through this movie before. Lay on a middle-class guilt trip but leave room for yourself.

Nothing that happened after changed my impression of what Marlene was saying. The most important things to fight are capitalism, imperialism and racism, she said. How to do that except through Women's Liberation she was asked in four different ways. What movement will you go to? A lot of us wanted, and needed, an answer to that. Every time she responded with a recitation of the horrors of capitalism, racism and imperialism. I've known about those horrors for a long time, nothing she said added any dimensions to them, but I have hopes that we can work to end them through women's liberation. I don't see any other way.

Marlene lashed out at other women for their liberal campaigns to change laws. I think she knew that we had spent a lot of time talking with women about that amendment. She talked down to all of us who have struggled daily to get that message across and now she was using it against us. Marlene had kind words for everyone but women: the youth culture had potential if it became political and it would become political as soon as the repression came down on it, which was inevitable, she said. The Black Panthers were the leading edge of revolution and not to be criticized--although Marlene seems to have forgotten that she was involved in quite a brouhaha at a Black Panther conference herself when she was the one "chosen" to represent women. So Marlene said she was getting out. Where would she go? I'm still wondering.

I was really proud of the three sisters from our collective who made the only points relevant to me all night. I'm still wondering about those points.

Marlene mentioned being at Sky River rock festival, the fundraising event sponsored by the Seattle Liberation Front, and she expressed disappointment that the event was non-political. I thought of our sisters in Fanshen and the Anna Louise Strong Brigade and their struggles within and without the Seattle Liberation Front and I thought about how beautiful those sisters must be. But Marlene didn't mention those sisters, she talked about how when the repression starts to come down on them, the youth culture will get political, so it's all for the good. Later, a woman from our collective got up and elaborated on what happened to women at Sky River and how three women were raped and a fourth rape was prevented by a female chauvin patrol. Only then did Marlene respond with any knowledge of how women were treated at Sky River. Somehow she didn't make any connection with what she'd said earlier. I thought, my god, she's had a frontal lobotomy, can't she see any connection with her statements about the youth culture? If she knew about it, why didn't she talk about it? If we can't prevent rapes by our so-called potential revolutionary allies, how in the hell can we prevent rapes of Vietnamese women? If we're invisible to a woman who's been working in women's liberation since 1966, when will we ever be seen? To be a woman is to fight always on two fronts, and it's not getting any easier. I deeply resented Marlene for that, I questioned her honesty, something I'd never done before.

Some women announced the organization of an anti-imperialist women's movement to sign a declaration of independence from American foreign policy. Women against the war? The Women's International League for Peace & Freedom did that in 1915 and they're still proclaiming their freedom from it. They're working against the draft and for a mercenary army. Some step forward. A woman from our collective, a woman who went to jail over the war four years ago, got up and expressed our feeling that this was a rip-off of the women's movement, expressed our sense of futility over such actions, over the takeover of the women's centers by the YSA and our need for an autonomous women's movement, and our refusal to be coopted by any elitist movement directed by the eastern very old left.

Marlene's reaction was to ridicule the phrase male-identified women, a term she doesn't use along with sexism or sisterhood.

A third woman told Marlene that she was simply wrong when she stated we weren't around during the invasion of Cambodia. We were indeed there, 24 hours a day at times--some of us walked off jobs, some went to jail. But mostly we spent so much time fighting for our single demand, an end to sexism, that we had little time to do anything else. Our demand was always the first one to be compromised so we had to fight twice as hard as anybody else. The sister asked, why didn't you see us, Marlene? (People who do watch, did--one campus equivalent of J. Edgar decided the WL people were the most dangerous on campus.) I thought of women all over the country who were told by the suddenly conscience-stricken liberals to take their "piddling provocations" elsewhere, that WE had to end the war. No response from Marlene.

Else where in this issue are excerpts from an earlier article by Marlene. In it she lays down a beautiful rap on women. In it she also raises the question of leadership in the women's movement. This was surely the Invisible Issue, the unspoken question at the Grinnell Conference. Marlene never mentioned the issue of leadership, because in her terms nothing but NOW exists. She put everything in terms of a class issue. In Marlene's terms we don't exist because we never solved the issue of leadership. All the groups that work as we do--as collectives that refuse to be experts and specialists--that question directions from any centralized group--we're all invisible. Her arguments are all addressed to the leadership of NOW.

Too bad. Something behind what Marlene says might be right. It might be impossible to create a non-racist women's movement. That worries me deeply because I will not take part in a racist one for any amount of freedom.

I don't know if Marlene even cared about what she was saying. She seemed to think it great fun when a dude went running out shouting his joy at the first snowfall and many of the people in the audience jumped up and left, the most exciting thing to happen to them all evening. Maybe when she cares about what she's saying, she goes to other places to say it.

I still don't know any answers to the important questions of how to end imperialism, racism, capitalism and sexism (yes, sexism, Marlene) but I know we won't get them at panels at elite colleges. Maybe we'll work them out together.

How can we fight for the needs of women and create a non-racist, non-exploitative society? Nothing that happened at Grinnell convinces me we don't need a women's movement. I can see that some women won't take part, and I guess I'm sorry that Marlene is one of them.

Grinnell Personal Rx

I went to Grinnell after going through a fairly traumatic week. The woman that I am having my first lesbian relationship with finally came down on me for all my insensitivities and told me how much I had been hurting her. In essence I had refused to see how different her experiences were from mine. She has been angry for a long time, and I just recently came out. The entire week I had been trying to deal with all the things she told me. When I went to Grinnell our relationship was foremost on my mind.

At Grinnell the workshop that was the heaviest for me was the first lesbian workshop. I heard a sister from Bloomington say with anger how she was tired of always dealing with the problems of lesbianism in light of women who have recently become lesbians. She said that Women's Liberation had somehow forgotten that the people who had been lesbians for a long time also have problems. She came across very strong with all her demands that gay women in Women's Liberation recognize their different experiences and accept what gay sisters have to say as being valid and unquestionable, because of different experiences. Because I had been thinking about this all week, what this sister said really hit home.

I think the results of this discussion were really tremendous. First, all of us started thinking in terms of how all gay women are different. Also, I think for the gay women who have been angry about many things that Women's Liberation has put on them, it was a time to get together. The result was that in the second workshop they were wonderfully together. It seems that many things WLF (at least here in Iowa City) has been doing will be changed. However, I saw one potentially bad thing. This was pegging people with labels. If anything, I think the lesbian workshops should have reinforced the fact that we are all individuals and all of our experiences must be recognized as such. It will be very destructive if we see what the sister from Bloomington said, as just a call for one more category. Categories do nothing but divide us and build up false dichotomies. It is when we look at problems in categories that we see no hope for the splits between straight and not-quite-straight, married and single, gay and straight, not-quite-gay and straight, and not-quite-gay and gay. Like we always say in the consciousness-raising groups - we are all sisters, and we all have individual experiences.

Other thoughts about Grinnell include how much I liked the Saturday night all - womens dance, how I met some really beautiful sisters that I can't wait to see again, how much I hate people talking down, or telling us where its at, and what a fantastic experience it is to cut hair. Also, I came away really afraid of the hassle that I can foresee with the anti-imperialism shit. I'm very much concerned about how I am going to be placed in the position of defending a women's liberation movement for women only.

Having only attended the workshops, I can only comment on that part of the conference. Generally, I thought the workshops were too big. Also it was bad that women were put in the position of "leading" workshops. Until we have better ways of providing resource information where people don't lecture or dominate the discussion, we should avoid putting ourselves in that position. Perhaps an alternative would be to write some suggested discussion topics and make them available before the discussion.

One of the two workshops on child care was very good. There was a fairly good exchange of practical experiences and ideas about child care as a revoltionary or reformist demand. Near the end of the workshop we started to get into some issues that we must begin to look at more closely. How can we organize women involved in child care centers? The place of males in child care work and in decision-making. The concept of child care centers controlled by females only. Just as we began to discuss some of these issues the workshop was over. We had planned to meet again at the second workshop on child care, but we ended up with a completely different group of people (except the Iowa City Day Care Collective). The second workshop was bad. We were all fairly exhausted and the Iowa City people put ourselves in the "teacher" position. We talked almost the whole time about our situation. and problems in Iowa City. We were so tired, we were saying things we don't even believe. We realized through the discussions that it would be beneficial to get together with other women who are involved in child care to discuss the problems and issues we are dealing with in child care.

To me, being involved with a man and in WLF, no matter how liberated your relationship is, (unmarried &/or equalitarian), is somewhat of a contradiction. This seemed to be the painful message given in at least one of the Marriage and the Institution of Sexual Intercourse workshops. Trying to unintellectualize marriage, and deal with it on a personal basis other than "we've got a groovy relationship" or " we've got a shitty relationship" is really hard.

The reasons why we find ourselves almost incapable of it are varied. "Married" women feel that any problems only involve themselves and their man, and thats where they can be discussed in any real way.

There has also been the feeling that WLF wasn't interested in these problems, (often shown when a married woman, new to the group, wonders if she is welcome). But that happens for some good reasons. It's hard not to get into patching up marriages that perhaps shouldn't be put back together. But this doesn't mean that WLF shouldn't be interested in any women's problems.

We must make married women feel welcome, as we must make all women welcome. And those of us involved with men, or "married" must quit intellectualizing it, and try to understand the effects of that relationship on our work and on our sisters.

It is difficult for me to write my reaction to the Grinnell conference because it left me with a lot of mixed feelings on a lot of subjects, none of which I can tie together. I feel as if suddenly I don't have a handle on anything and there is so much I don't understand. Usually I think I have a pretty good understanding of stuff even though I don't know what to do. But I feel shaken now and unsure of the correctness of my thoughts.

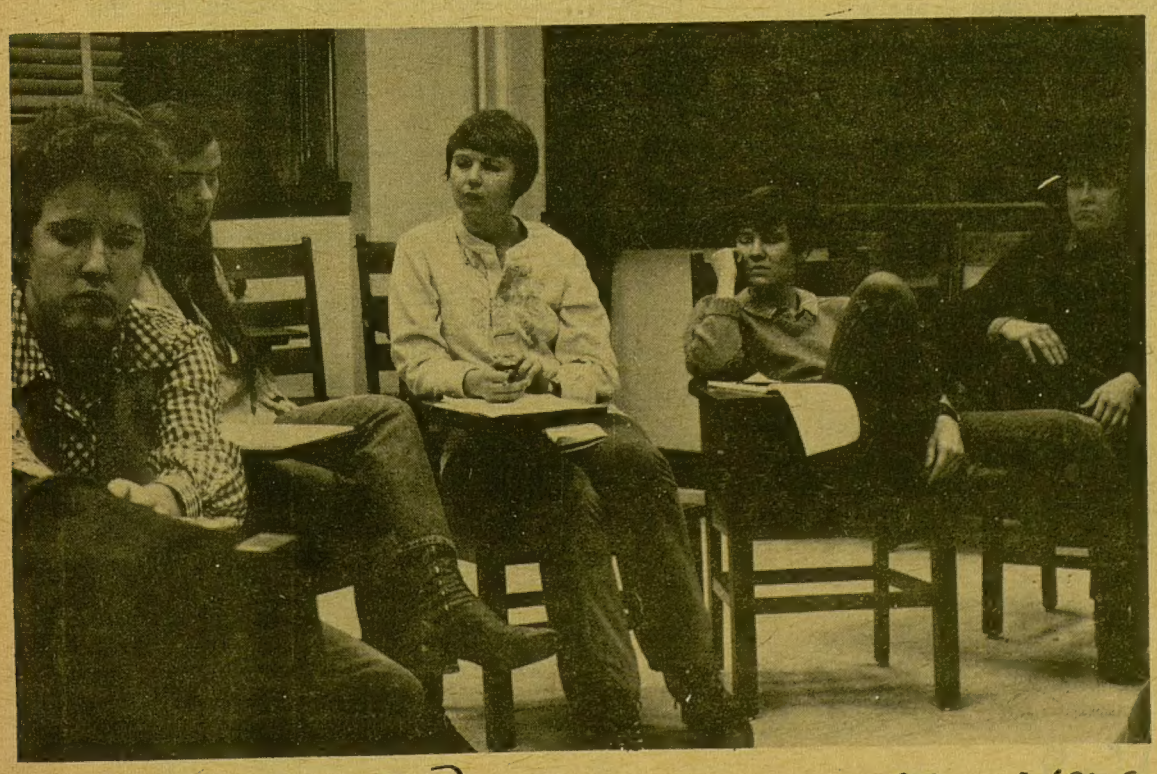
There were so many women there with a million different things on their minds, so no one really seemed to get to talk about what they wanted to. Nor was there the feeling of sisterhood or acceptance I have felt before at conferences. Everyone seemed defensive. The gay sisters were very strong and together but I felt a real division between gay and straight which left me dangling in the middle. This was the heaviest thing for me that weekend. The other great concern I am left with is racism.

I have been only recently acknowledging my gayness. Not because of any recent sexual experience but first through realizing the feelings I have for other women and the primacy women hold in my life. Second by looking backward and admitting what I have experienced and felt. By admitting the painfulness involved in relationships I had with women when these relationships were given no legitimacy. It is the second process that has been very painful.

I decided to go to the Lesbianism workshop at the conference and although the first workshop was closed to only gay women my sisters and I kept joking about my going--that for me they'd make a deal. It was important for me to not have to hassle with straight sisters. I need my experiences affirmed and straight sisters always seem to question the validity or political importance of my experiences and I don't find that helpful at all and difficult to take. Before the workshop when some of us were joking about why I was going, I said that I was going because I was gay. I was so shocked at how hard it was for me to say that.

At the workshop everyone had many different experiences and those women who have been gay for a long time resented having to be constantly concerned with how they relate to straight women and whether they threaten them or not and there seemed quite a division between those women who came out through WL and those who were leading gay lives before WL. I really felt that there was validity in what the gay sisters said but I felt really torn, unable to talk on this subject to straight women and not really legitimately gay.

Women are of prime concern to me and I am critical of any revolutionary groups when they are sexist but I am afraid that my criticism of third world revolutionary groups could become racist or that criticisms that WL as a whole has can turn to be racist. I don't think my concern is uncalled for cause just as I didn't know at one time that what I said to gay women was sexist I may not even know consciously whether I am being racist or not and I am very worried about it. I hate to think I would have to make the choice of fighting for WL and being racist or compromising women.



MORE ABOUT GRINNELL

Though the conference as a whole was disappointing to me, I met a lot of women who I felt an immediate closeness with. In workshops on Saturday I began to realize just how a right-on sister was relating to the group; I recognized women who were struggling, questioning, changing. And I recognized those who were still relating in old untrusting structures, who were reacting as "liberals" but not really ready to change their minds.

Confrontation

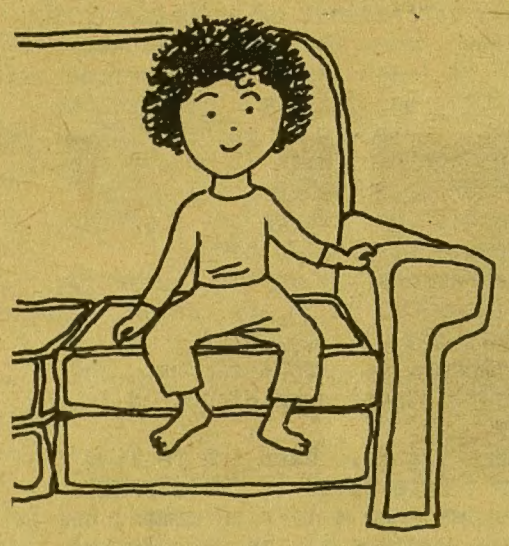
Late Saturday night, after our all-women party, two sisters were just outside the dorm, rapping, feeling intense, hugging each other. Four men walking together hassled them -- and they reacted with vocal enough rage that five more of us came outside and screamed at them, told them to move on and FAST. *They moved. WE moved*, kept yelling, stayed together. They shut up too; some of the women dropped back, and TWO of us marched four of them as far away as we wanted them to be, before we ran laughing back to the door where our sisters were watching. This is written with love to my beautiful sisters from Bloomington, Indiana who took that walk with me and in the cold air awoke to a feeling of strength I'd never known..

I feel a new confidence now in my perception, in relating to other women and in working in a group. We have all learned defenses and there are so many women with the same defenses against the same oppression. There are a lot of things to make us feel threatened anyway; we must struggle not to threaten each other. Only if I am really honest with myself can others trust me to be honest with them. If I say I'm relating to you and I'm actually relating to a category, I have categorized you and that is a racist-sexist-classist kind of structure. If I say "you" when I mean "what you represent in my eyes" I am being unfair to you the individual. We have grown up accustomed to wearing blinders like this. When we tear 'em all down we can maybe see each other as whole people.

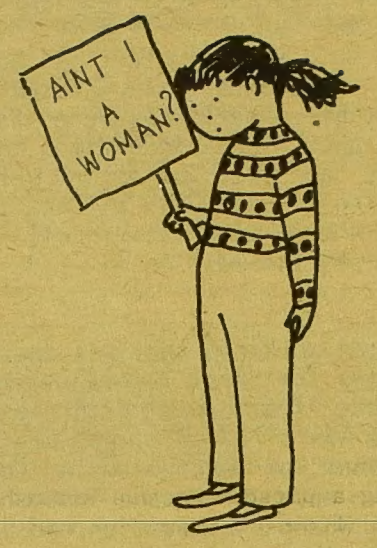
The thing I liked best about Grinnell was the apple juice, the stew, the bread, and most of all the solidarity of the gay women.

The first night we all stayed in the same place and talked late. On Saturday we held two Lesbianism Workshops--one for gay women only and one for straight women. Although an hour and a half is hardly time for gay women to cover all that they have to say to each other, we began a discussion that we have continued intensely in Iowa City. In the first workshop a woman from Bloomington, Ind. acknowledged the importance of Women's Liberation in the final elimination of her guilt at being gay, but with some bitterness said she had been messed over by Women's Liberation seeing gay relationships in heterosexual ways. Women who had become gay through Women's Liberation were asked not to say anything so that women with a common gay experience could think about their relation to Women's Liberation. This moratorium on Women's Liberation gay women talking came at an unfortunate time for one of the sisters from Iowa City who had just realized that gay women were the only people in Women's Liberation who she felt could understand her experience and from whom she felt needed support. I don't think there needs to be a split between old and new gay women, but just that each get a chance to understand their different experience and the inter-relationships between the two.

During the first part of the workshop for straight women another moratorium was put on straight women talking. They listened while we talked and interestingly enough instead of being defensive we dwelt on the little cultural things that being gay we have and draw us together. I felt a real strength and solidarity that came out in a way surprising to me. I was prouder and more free to be myself without fear of judgement. I felt so free that I danced.



Before the conference I often didn't understand my sisters when they were offended by things to which I didn't react strongly. Now I have a clearer idea of what does rip off women. People who are making a new society, people who say they are revolutionary, cannot be excused for taking one single gain at the expense of other oppressed people; if they do they're not changing anything, just jockeying for position within the old cruddy structure. I won't make excuses for the male-identified movements that depend on the subservience of women to get their shitwork done and make their "gains."



Collectivity is a Process

Being collective in this society is against everything we've been conditioned for. Collectivity is only a process right now. Ideally it will be honest sharing, gut-level trust of others, sincerely felt responsibility for the well-being of others. Presently, those intentions must stem from humanitarian instincts that our religious up-bringing cultivated rather than based on any experience, since they are contrary to the sexist, imperialistic, capitalistic, racist, fascist, all-competitive societal standards that are permeating our minds every minute of our lives. I haven't yet felt collectivity, but I can still differentiate between my intellectual, and partially gut-level belief in its rightness and the trustingness I think it's going to become.

Collective living is a means to raising our consciousness(es?) to a collective consciousness, which is not, in my opinion, completely possible within this antagonistic society. It influences everything in our personal lives even though we attempt to shut it out of our dwelling places and meetings. In relation to our society, the atmosphere in and intentions of our living collective are true collectivity. Yet, we have not been truly collective, nor can we be, as long as we are only a microcosm in an alien environment, that environment having nurtured us and not failed in fucking up our heads.

I don't mean we can't act collectively or think collectively or possibly even feel sincerely in that direction. I maintain, however, that our attitudes are in the process of changing-- the living collective is definitely a positive, necessary influence but we are not capable of total rejection of life-long influence of values and methods while functioning within the society that propagates the oppressive system we're undermining.

We can build our need for collectivity by practicing it. We explore its meaning by practicing it. We can start to know how it feels (as opposed to intellectually knowing it) by practicing it. We can practice it. Practice. Practice and practice. It's all we can do within this system.

And when many, many women have come to understand as much as is possible about collectivity, and these women collectively feel the need to experience true sisterhood within a collective society (I believe it is called socialism), the oppressive system which has kept collectives functioning as microcosms will be overturned. In order to accomplish this, the collective living, collective acting, collective thinking process will have to go on... and on... and on... toward the revolution we feel coming.

It's like my whole life I've been worried about one quarter of my mind or another. I used to love people in an all consuming, total, ultimate concern, way. It was like having a constant crush; it went right to my stomach. It was incapacitating to a great extent except that I was so disciplined that I could control when I'd let my mind think about the one I loved and so I managed to function.

I could never understand why I loved the women I loved. Granted, I was at that time a very disciplined, scientific person who would never let my feelings get the better of me. It seemed to me that my love feelings had no rational basis; they would come over me almost immediately upon meeting a person. I was afraid that they stemmed from only the physical being of the person, and this I thought was not a good enough reason for loving. So given that the love I felt was so unreasonable and incapacitating, I was a little dissatisfied with it. At the same time, the people I loved made my life meaningful and gave me energy and I was very happy with it. The best way of expressing what love means to me is this zen telegram:

Seeing the smile in your eyes I have forgotten that people die.

I've thought alot about the immediate intensity of my feelings about some women because it has bothered me alot. But over the years I've observed that my perceptions of people are hardly ever wrong. Lots of times when I meet a sister for the first time I feel a huge compassion and empathy for her. I think it's because a person's experience and what they've gone through shows in their face and the way they carry themselves. You can see suffering through a woman's eyes.

I can't figure out exactly when or why my way of feeling love changed, but I do remember that I had a hard time realizing that I still was able to love--it was just that my way of loving had changed and I couldn't recognize it. It's not very clear cut at all and alot of things that you wouldn't think would have to do with it, had to do with it. Like politics and Women's Liberation. The change in my feelings on love had to do with my conclusions about the format in which I as a person and my love for another could survive and grow. I discovered while relating to a woman in an exclusive one to one relationship, that it inhibited my freedom as a person. The constant tension created in me between what I wanted and needed to be and do and what the format of the relationship allowed me to be and do gradually destroyed our relationship. The time I spent on Women's Liberation was resented, because she was left alone and who could blame her. She started going out with a perfectly nice boy who I was incredibly jealous of and whom I hated. The one to oneness of our relationship made all this fatal.

The other thing I discovered later is that Women's Liberation isn't a 8-5 job. It is a process and a way of living and I wanted to live it and not just work at it. I guess some other women must have felt this way because 8 of us formed a women's collective in which we now all live. What I want to do with my life is be a revolutionary and you just can't do that in my opinion within the context of a 1:1 relationship. Either being a revolutionary requires too much time to allow enough time to make the relationship work or as is statistically probable the woman you love isn't interested in being a revolutionary too.

Anyway, I found myself feeling much more evenly about people--fewer highs and lows--more like a steady good feeling. I was less incapacitated and less hyper. It's probably the disciplined sober part of me which makes me think this particular change is for the better. My feelings were so intense and seemingly based on nothing that I was afraid that they might end just as unreasonably as they began and I would have no control over it.

Another thing that may have to do with the change in the way I love is just a theory of mine, but it may be true. (It involves the fact that the change in the way I felt love came just as I was getting into Women's Liberation.) Before I got involved in W.L. my time was more taken up by people I loved. After I got into W.L. my commitments to other people changed because I'd made an ultimate commitment to feminist revolution. This really only governs my time, but time has a way of effecting everything. It didn't affect my love, its intensity or what people mean to me--just the time I could devote to expressing it. To say what I'm committed to do says nothing about what I'd like to do or rather do at any one particular moment. It tells me what I must and should do and sometimes that means disciplining my feelings.

Since I've written this, it too has been questioned and now I don't know where I am. Two women whose opinions I respect questioned my nice pat intellectual conclusions about 1:1 relationships. They said I sounded bitter (Now, that in itself is hard for an old pollyanna like me to take. Although, I'm beginning to think optimistic people just hide or channel their bitterness--it makes us less angry, but more able to function.) That I had been hurt and am now running or at least keeping myself from becoming so involved again.

I don't know how to handle that, because it contradicts my conception of myself. I thought and thought about it and I don't know how to go about changing my behavior.

Yesterday, I finally could not think about it anymore. After a good night's sleep my devastated reaction that the best thing to do would be not relate to anyone anymore is subsiding and the pollyanna in me is taking over again. I've always been amazed at how my body and mind reacted in healthy ways to things. There must have been a good reason why my mind couldn't think about it more. Dwelling on pain is constructive only up to a point and then it destroys you. Knowing this, the cells in my body and mind took the pain away from my consciousness to work on it with the strength of nature.

LEN'A H

Being married, I sometimes feel very much alone
Because
If the nuclear family (read marriage) is something
we are determined to do away with
as a norm

Where does that leave me?

If a relationship with a man - for that's what it's all about-
has no future

And a man is willing to change a role,
to try and un-role himself

As I must try and un-role me

What do we do?

And yet, I know
that at times -

I wish I could tell you
How sorry I am
I'm beginning to realize
I hurt you
I can only say
I hurt you - I'll stop
I care about you
How can I hurt you?
You told me
I've loved women differently
You told things you had felt and seen
I said, I know I know
I don't know - I'm sorry
Women have struggled together
How can I forget?
You told your experiences
I said I doubt it
How could I?
I can see your anger - I'm sorry
Why can't I trust you? I'm sorry
As even now I can't tell you, I'm sorry
But then I'm sorry is not even enough.

where are we going ?

The Following article is excerpted from Marlene Dixon's WHERE ARE WE GOING? appearing in the February, 1970 special issue on women of RADICAL AMERICA.
(See page for information on ordering the magazine.)

...The strength of the women's movement is rooted in the real oppression of women, while its future potentiality as a mass movement clearly depends upon the quality of the consciousness that women develop. Both the socialist and the consciousness-raising groups (in early meetings) were in this sense correct. Ultimately, the strength of the movement will rest upon the depth of women's understanding of the nature and origins of their oppression and upon the honesty with which they are able to face the psychological terrors of open rebellion. It is a fearful thing for a woman to be a rebel, as much for the Movement "wife" as for the average housewife.

Indeed, much of what passed for "ideological struggle" at the (Chicago, 1968) women's conference was in fact a disgusied struggle between totally rebellious "independent" women and radical women who work primarily within women's caucuses. The tension that surrounded the unspoken fears of women concerning the consequences of open rebellion often took the form that women, and other oppressed groups, are most familiar with: turning upon each other. Much of the pathology of the conference, particularly in terms of personal animosity and suspicion, could be directly traced to the degree to which each woman was still dependent upon men for her evaluation of herself. The boldest and most fearless women were clearly those who had bolted from, or never belonged to, established leftist organizations; they were followed by those women still in such organizations, but active in women's auxiliaries. The unattached and curious women, newcomers to the movement, were the most timid and confused.

The defensiveness that characterized the workshops and plenary sessions was the expression of an overriding anxiety about being able to justify the existence of a women's movement. The Invisible Audience present at the Chicago conference were the very "male heavies" who had done so much to bring about the existence of a radical women's female liberation movement. The radical women had a prior history engraved upon their foreheads: Ruby Doris Smith Robinson presenting The Position of Women in SNCC (1964) provoking Stokely Carmichael's famous reply: "The only position for women in SNCC is prone"; Casey Hayden and Mary King rousing a storm of controversy for their articles in Studies on the Left and Liberation; and the December, 1965, SDS conference greeting a discussion and floor demonstration on the issue of women with catcalls, storms of ridicule and verbal abuse. "She just needs a good screw", or (the all-time favorite) "She's a castrating female".

Women had learned from 1964 to 1968 that to fight for or even to sympathize with women's liberation was to pay a terrible price: what little credit a woman might have earned in one of the Left organizations was wiped out in a storm of contempt and personal abuse.

The strategy that the leftist women had adopted for the Chicago conference was to develop a "politics" with sufficient analytical merit to force the men to recognize the legitimacy of the women's movement, a tactic which has paid off in the Movement by 1969. Socialism, Revolution, Capitalism were thick in discussion. WITCH, Consciousness Raising and Radicals met head-on in debate, amid many hard feelings. The trouble was that none of these analyses, and this unfortunately especially applied to radical women, seriously linked theory and practice in such a way as to lead to strategies for action. For instance, the radical women had not yet begun to push for day care centers in working class organizing, although when they at last found an action, they were to become as fanatical and sectarian in rejecting all those whose minds remained unblasted by Truth as the non-Movement women.

The "ideology" of the radical women was, by and large, an academic exercise in the art of the "intellectual male heavy" in the Movement. The radical women were decimated by the invisible male audience. Thus, the real split among the women hinged upon the significant audience that women addressed: other women, or Movement men. The audience determined not only ideology, but the role women took in workshops and debate. Also, most crucially, the choice of audience determined the ability of one woman to understand another. Yet, irrespective of the origin of stressing political analysis above all other elements of the women's movement, or even the rather vulgar Marxist-Leninist character of early attempts, the long range effect has had tremendous importance to furthering the intellectual maturity of the women's movement.

At the conference, and in later controversies, the basic division between women is usually referred to as "consciousness-raising" vs. "radical" or "bourgeois" vs. "revolutionary." The names are very misleading for understanding the division, but highly indicative of the nature of the misunderstanding between women.

Women are trained to nuances, to listening for the subtle cues which carry the message hidden under the words. It is part of that special skill called "intuition" or "empathy" which all female children must learn if they are to be successful in manipulating others to get what they want and to be successful in providing "sympathy and understanding" to their husbands and lovers. The skill is so central to communication between women and all others- women to women, women to men, women to children- that it is not surprising to note that intuition is also central to political communication among women. There are no words for communication which occurs on many complex levels, so that it is quite possible to have two complete communication processes going on at once- the articulated and the implicit levels. At the women's conference the overt process was all in a man's vocabulary of political rhetoric and analysis, while the covert level was altogether different...

...the battle was waged in a political vocabulary, but the issues had really to do with basic orientations toward women. The wildcat groups took woman (as mystical, rebellious, expressive and mysterious, or as enraged) as their ideal, while the leftist women were using leader-intellectual (the role from which all rewards flow in the Movement) as theirs. The tragedy of this misunderstanding was that political polarization - needless polarization - was the result. The wildcat women, many of whom hate the movement bitterly because of the chauvinism they experienced in it, dismissed the leftists as unliberated spokeswomen for the submersion of the women's struggle in the "revolutionary" struggle; while the leftist women dismissed the wildcats as hopelessly a-political and counter-revolutionary. That each might have learned from the other, that all shared real conditions of oppression, was obscured.

Another battle was waged on the level of sentiments, in the suspicion of leaders. The resentment against women who seemed in charge (such as experienced by Marilyn Webb and others who had worked hard, and thanklessly, to bring the conference about) was real, a product of all of the participants' experience with established organizations. Women had suffered so much from the oppression of 'male heavies', whether from a boss on the job or a boss in the movement or the boss at home, suffered from being forced to be camp followers, ignored in decision making and treated generally with contempt for their intellectual and moral qualities. Their resentment, therefore, of any woman who even appeared to be playing a typical male leadership role, whether true or not, bordered on the pathological.

The women's movement, like the black movement before it (and most rebellious movements in their early stages of development), is torn by suspicion and rivalry: everyone wants to be a leader, or to be in a position to achieve recognition for which they are starved. But no one wants to admit it. Years of second class citizenship breeds in people an enormous hunger to be recognized. If one's hunger is to be once again frustrated, then, damn it!, no one else is going to enjoy the pleasures of recognition either. The result was that 'leaders' 'led' by virtue of doing hard, ugly work and then bent over backwards trying to appear to be 'non-leaders'. This, of course, fooled no one. The long nurtured secret hunger for recognition has been hidden for so long it had taken on a magical, fearful meaning -- no one could talk about it. It remained, at the conference, unexpressed and sour, a slow acid eating at the women's movement, guaranteeing that it will remain segmentalized, split into tiny groups in every major city and region, unaware of its potential size and power. Thus the issue of leadership, of democratizing the structure of the movement, of fighting against the manifold corruptions of elitism is not only a major problem in political theory for women, it is the practical problem which must be solved before the movement can reach its maturity. The alternative is death through factionalism and disintegration...

...radical women, even in the face of a large, well-funded liberal or left-liberal organization such as the National Organization of Women, remain tied to a male audience, defining themselves in terms of men's organizations exclusively and continuing to regard women opportunistically, as another group to further the struggle. So long as women remain tied to the men's 'line', and blind to their own exploitation by white middle class male radicals, it will not be radical women who do the organizing. The organizing will be done by politically unsophisticated, profoundly liberal women who address women's oppression directly. Unless the radical women get themselves together, in the interests of their own oppression and the oppression of all their sisters, a mass movement dominated by an ideology of 'let us in' (and not 'set us free') will develop in the next few years.

Women must face facts. Men will never, until forced by circumstances, place first, or even urgent, priority upon a struggle against the oppression of women... Men must carry the burden of 'white middle class guilt'; they cannot live with the growing recognition that in their daily lives they exploit and oppress; and so, they struggle against women and against the almost intolerable process of self-recognition women are now demanding they undergo.

For example, it is not an accident that radical women have not been organizing. The energies of radical women have too long been deflected into arguing-pleading-justifying their cause, i.e. to fighting male chauvinism, male supremacy, in the movement. Theirs has been a profoundly a-political, personalized struggle, one devoted to personal liberation. It is ironic that radical women so wrapped up in their sex lives and Movement careers,

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so obsessed with personal liberation, have been unable to see the contradiction in turning to attack (as utopian, apolitical and bourgeois) women who are doing no more than the same thing, only with more boldness, originality and courage: women refusing to marry, women setting up liberated communes, women concerned with raising children collectively, women who have tried to show the possibilities of experimentation with free lives.

Male supremacy is a man's problem, and they are either with us or part of the problem -- the solution is their responsibility. What is important is building an army that will attack the brutal inhumanity and injustice of a capitalist society at every weak point of its abusive exploitation of the powerless, that will spread the idea of liberation through all the web of contradiction and oppression that destroys human beings before they are half begun in life. The arrogance, duplicity and culpability of men who will not admit the power and authenticity of a mass movement based upon the oppression of women - all women - is to be condemned, in the name of revolutionary discipline, for they weaken and abort the liberation of a people. These men are dupes and victims of their own society, containing within themselves the image of a ruling class, for they exhibit contempt for human beings, opposition to the freedom of human beings, an absolute refusal to stop benefiting from the exploitation of human beings. Let them come along or get out of the way.

The Feb., 1970 issue of Radical America on women can be ordered for 75¢ from

Radical America
1237 Spaight Street
Madison, Wisc.
53703

The Men They did it again. The Bastards. -- A woman in SNCC, 1964

GAY SISTERS GET TOGETHER

Midwestern Gay Women are having a retreat to talk, Nov. 27-29. We have discovered a place called the Cedar Lake Retreat Home just outside of Milwaukee, RR#4, West Bend, Wisconsin. It can be had for a reasonable cost and would be a beautiful place for us to hold a retreat over the Thanksgiving holidays. We would stay in a large farmhouse on a large piece of land, have access to a beachhouse and exclusive use of the lakefront (not much use to us in November). In short, after being welcomed by a representative of the place we would enjoy complete isolation.

We would have to bring our own food and do our own cooking, of course. Share of the cost is 3.50 per person. Plan to arrive in early afternoon of Nov. 27. For any further information on this, contact Ain't I A Woman?

Please Tell Us Who You Are
When you send information or announcement stuff, it's important for us to know who's doing it and whether it's by women and for women.

WOMEN SEEKING ABORTIONS:
Call
FAMILY PLANNING INFORMATION SERVICE
212-777 4504
CLERGY CONSULTATION CENTER
local branch - or telephone national offices:
212-477-0034
254-6230
466-0351
LOCAL WOMENS LIBERATION GROUPS
WOMENS MEDICAL GROUP REFERRAL SERVICE
for under 12 week pregnancies call
212-744-5640
212-472-9164

Specific CLINICS trying to meet the needs for all women:

WOMENS MEDICAL GROUP }
EASTSIDE MEDICAL GROUP } 133 East 73rd St., NYC
both groups serve women under 12 weeks only - using the vacuum aspirator or "suction" method. These groups also do followup counselling and fit for birth control. $200. or less
212-472-9676 or 7
UN1 9000
DR. MICHAEL BERGMANN CLINIC (name may be changed)
80 Irving Place, NYC
Women must have medical confirmation of pregnancy before going here.
WOMENS MEDICAL SERVICES
takes referrals from Clergy Consultation Centers
$200.
As final resort, call Women's Health and Abortion Project
c/o Women's Center, 36 West 22 St., NYC
691-1860 or 1

The Women's Health and Abortion Project in New York, 36 West 22nd Street, NYC, is finding out more about details of cost, capacity, residency restrictions, etc., as well as doing abortion referral. They do not regard themselves as a social work agency but want to help their sisters in need and work in the most political way possible – i.e. to help build a strong broadly based women's movement, to change the health system, to give women control over their bodies and lives. Local women's liberation groups into abortion counselling and referral are asked to contact WHAP and to send literature and information to them so that they can help out-of-state women. They suggest pressuring doctors, Planned Parenthood, and other instituitons to set up high quality-lowcost clinics in the State.

Women who are 14-22 weeks pregnant have no other legal choice than to try to get into a hospital for a "salting-out" or saline type abortion. This involves direct injection into the uterus of a 20% saline solution to induce labor, a method for more complicated than the simple "vacuum aspirator" or "D and C" type used for earlier pregnancies. The Board of Health recently (Sept. 9) did a *non*-routine investigation of the materials used in this procedure, and then suppressed the findings. Because a brother was able to rip off this report, we are able to relay at least some of the data: In 23 City (all-borough) hospitals, the saline solution percentage ran from 17-23.4% in contrast to 20%. Sterility was a serious question. Samples of saline solution were found to be contaminated with: 45 pieces of blue thread-like fibers (synthetic); 1 human hair (3" long); 20 blue micro. synthetic fibers; 14 pieces of glass, 1/8 inch in size; traces of formaldehyde; 12 pieces micro glass - 15cc in size; white crystalline sediment on standing; micro. and insoluble numerous foreign particles - wood, cotton, synthetic fibers, and also black, microscopic carbonaceous particles.

Reprinted from RAT

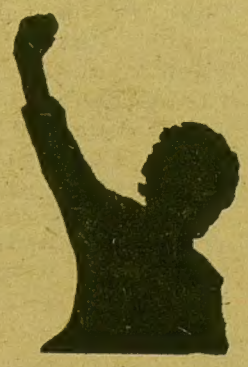
The trapped woman is at the mercy of the man's technology. What can a woman do?

COSTS: Costs vary with the length of the pregnancy and where the operation is performed. For early abortions the following applies:
Available to NYC women Only:
Municipal hospitals – $160.
Voluntary Hosp. clinics – $150-$300
Available to all women:
Voluntary Hosp. private patients – $350-$650
Proprietary (private) hospitals – $350-$800
Doctors' offices and clinics – $50-$300

Right now, richer women go to private hospitals and poorer women go to non-hospital clinics and doctors' offices. By forbidding abortions in offices and low-cost clinics a residency restriction is imposed on poor women only while rich women continue to have free access. NO step forward to meet womens' demands for abortions has been made. Our demands for abortion care are: FREE, LEGAL, SAFE, ON DEMAND!!!

DISARM RAPISTS!

WOMEN'S HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER, INC.
2325 Oak, Berkeley
Open most anytime
call (415)-524-7772



A research, lending, corresponding, and selling library of women's literature. Work done by women using it. A running catalogue including addresses to order materials in available at cost to other groups to avoid having to start from scratch. For $1, a bibliography of items in our files with addresses (as of July, 1969) for ordering the material; for $5, a packet of action project ideas, and periodical, paper, book and book review bibilographies (as of Sept, 1969) of WL interest; for $2 addenda to bibliography to Jan., 1970; for $4, addenda to bibilography to Aug., 1970. A synopsis of women in world history is available for $1 including poster and postage. A paper on the suffrage movement in Western Europe is 15¢ plus stamp, Redstockings Manifestos East and West likewise. A SPAZM newsletter of women's news, April to December 1969 (personal statements, news events, reviews, etc) is available: 30 issues for $15 to individuals, $20 to institutions.

Schizophrenic Poem

1

my heart is the echo of a scream
projected into silence-
locking itself in because
the need to touch
can become the need to die.

there are too many choices.

11

words don't answer questions
like why people breathe, talk, touch
like why i sometimes find i can't
move-

words can't answer pain.

111

i haven't been able to touch
(trust) a woman for a long
time.
the sickness has gone that far
before i begin to locate the
pain.

ain't no antibiotics for this, babe
the doctor just skipped town with your fears
& some stranger's in control of your needs.

iV

i've never made love to a woman.
i've made love to & been fucked by a lot of men
but right now i'm too
horney to make love to anyone
& i'm too lonely to love
myself.

Now what shall I do with such a feeling?
alone
deserted
unloved
I can cry: tears of hurt and self-hate: cartharsis
I can run away; it's worked before
I can talk; but it won't help
A poem or.....

Don't worry:
I won't possess you
I won't stifle your love for other women
It's counter-revolutionary, ...
jealousy
Subversive to sisterhood (loving women)

Like the rich--
Their guts won't agree to sharing
Like men--
Their guts won't give up their privileges
We must take them if they are to be ours
And so with our love I so jealously hold:
it must be taken.
Taken by the sisters to be shared-- it's not vicious
But my stomach can't agree:
I've been trained to hoard everything that's important: survival in America ..it's political and understandable?
My stomach will have to learn-- adjust
Sisterhood is post-revolutionary behavior now
Its pain and struggle and beauty together
Someday I'll see the other side-- your side.
I'm not reaching out and giving love to sisters as you are--
Lack of confidence, fear of hassles, who knows why,
But now I must deal with you and your sisterhood
I can struggle as
long as you and the sisters understand and care.

We are told that our sense of oppression is not legitimate. We are told that women's liberation is a secondary issue, to be dealt with after the war is won. But the basis of women's oppression is economic in a sense that far predates capitalism and the market economy and it is woven through the whole fabric of socialization. Our claims are the most radical for they entail restructuring even the nuclear family. Nowhere on earth are women free now, although in some places things are marginally better. What we want we will have to invent ourselves.

Marge Piercy